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Mr M Young  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Young

Ofsted survey inspection programme: English

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 17 April 2008 to look at work in English.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of four lessons. The overall effectiveness of English was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Standards are average and pupils' achievement is good.

- Standards were broadly average at the end of both key stages in 2007. This reflects a decline from previous years, when standards had been above average. Pupils tend to do better in reading than writing. The gap between the attainment of boys and girls last year was in line with the national trend.
- Children's attainment on entry to the nursery is below average. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage. However, many children reach standards in aspects of English such as writing and phonic knowledge that are still below national expectations on entry to Year 1.
- Achievement overall is good. This was confirmed by good progress in the lessons observed and also by data presented by the school across

all classes. However, most pupils make more progress in reading than writing; this includes higher attaining pupils.

- The school tracks pupils' progress well and evidence suggests that the current Year 6 pupils are likely to do better in the national tests than the 2007 results.

## Quality of teaching and learning of English

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Lessons observed were consistently good overall, with some outstanding features. This judgement was confirmed by discussions with pupils and evidence from the work sample.
- Strengths in lessons observed included: very good classroom management and high expectations of behaviour; the use of a range of active approaches that engaged pupils; very good behaviour and positive pupil attitudes; and clear understanding about learning aims and outcomes.
- Pupils enjoy lessons in English, particularly the variety of activities and the increasing use of drama and speaking and listening.
- In some of the lessons observed, there was a tendency for teachers to try to cover too much and this restricted the time available to pupils for independent work.
- The school is currently developing the use of learning targets in English for pupils. Some pupils are very clear about how they need to improve their work and spoke well of how teachers had reviewed and changed the targets. However, practice is uneven at the moment and this is reflected by variations in the quality of marking. The best marking is very detailed and gives helpful feedback about areas of weakness. Some marking tends to focus excessively on positive feedback, with little direct reference to the pupils' learning targets.

## Quality of curriculum

The curriculum in English is outstanding.

- The English curriculum is broad and balanced and motivates most pupils well. There is a good emphasis on speaking and listening, including drama, together with regular opportunities for extended writing.
- Pupils are encouraged to read outside school and this process is monitored consistently through reading records. However, some opportunities are missed to discuss, challenge and extend pupils' independent wider reading.
- The school has given careful consideration to ways of developing English through increasing creativity. This has been thoughtfully planned making use of pilot projects and whole staff training. The school has established a clear, shared understanding of creativity in

the curriculum. This is already leading to better cross-curricular links, more focus on activities that will inspire pupils, and increased emphasis on drama and discussion.

- The English curriculum is enhanced by a very good range of extra-curricular opportunities. Although many are not directly connected to English, for instance visits to local sites, these all provide pupils with very good contexts for work in literacy. In addition, the school organises regular visits to the theatre or from visiting drama groups and visits from writers. The school runs a drama club and involves pupils in producing a regular school newspaper.

## Leadership and management of English

Leadership and management are outstanding.

- The school has created a strong senior leadership team with responsibility for English shared across the different key stages. This provides a clear sense of direction to subject development. Subject leaders provide good leadership across the key stages, with regular training, team discussions and access to resources. Performance is reviewed systematically and careful thought has been given to ways of developing the English curriculum. The innovative approach to creativity reflects good vision and effective planning.
- Monitoring of pupils' progress is very good with regular assessment contributing to a clear understanding of pupils' performance and what needs to be done to support those pupils who are falling behind.
- Planning for the subject is secure and provides good support for teachers leading to consistency of approach across classes.
- The school is increasingly listening to what pupils say about English and using this to develop subject provision. Links with parents are good, especially for the younger children, and advice is given about how parents can support pupils' reading.
- Subject development plans are detailed and reflect the right priorities although at present they try to cover too much and lack specificity in success criteria.

## Inclusion

Pupils achieve well overall. This includes some of the most vulnerable pupils who make very good progress in relation to their starting points on entry to the school. The progress of vulnerable pupils is tracked closely and the school provides a number of programmes to support low attaining pupils, including Reading Recovery and the ELS initiative. Pupils from the attached unit were well integrated into lessons observed.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving standards of writing, including for the higher attaining pupils
- reviewing ways of extending and challenging pupils' wider, independent reading
- improving the consistency of teachers' marking and the use of learning targets for pupils, building on existing good practice.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop English in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term and made available to the team for the next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Philip Jarrett HMI  
Subject Adviser for English